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## Islamisation of Political Thought Courses at IIUM<sup>1</sup>

*Aldila binti Dato' Isahak*  
*Department of Political Science*

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#### Introduction

When the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS) was established in 1990, its two divisions, namely, Islamic Revealed Knowledge, and Human Sciences, opened their doors to students who wanted to pursue their degrees in these areas, by opening up new departments. In the Human Sciences Division, these departments were Political Science, History, Communication, Psychology, Sociology & Anthropology and Philosophy (the last being closed down subsequently). All these departments, including Political Science, had to ensure that courses taught in their degree programmes were in line with IIUM's philosophy, and its mission and vision.

As we all know, the philosophy of IIUM is based on the concept of knowledge that is embedded in the first five verses of *Surah al-'Alaq*. Hence, courses that were/are to be taught at IIUM ought to be based on the worldview of *tawhid*. The challenge of teaching Political Science amidst a Western-centric paradigm is to come up with a curriculum that is based on the Islamic worldview. Political Thought, being one of the specialised areas of Political Science, needs to be taught to students who want to major in the subject. The objective of this essay is to look into the elements that contribute to the process of Islamisation of one of the core courses in Political Science, that is, Political Thought. The elements that are looked into are epistemology, worldview and the selected thinkers incorporated in the syllabus.

#### Islamisation of Political Thought: An Analysis

The First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Makkah in 1977 found, among other things, that the primary reason for the loss of sense of identity of Muslims to the West lay in the education system. All fields of knowledge, whether natural sciences or human sciences, were imbued with Western values, based on a West-centric worldview. This is what Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas meant, when he said that contemporary knowledge is "*infused* with the character and personality of Western culture and civilization and *moulded* in the crucible of Western culture..." (Al-Attas 162; italics in original). As a consequence, Muslims who went through the education system that is based on a culture alien to Islam, developed a worldview that is not based on *tawhid* but Western secularism. It eventually led the Muslims to move away from their religious and indigenous cultural values, and created a dearth of Muslim scholars in the fields of both human sciences and natural sciences, creating an ignorance among Muslims about their heritage and a total confusion about what is right and what is wrong in their everyday affairs of life.

Post-Renaissance, post-Enlightenment Western worldview and Islamic worldview are essentially different in their fabric, and operate on two different nomenclatures. The former is based on human rationality or "ontological proximity" as explained by Ahmet Davutoglu (Davutoglu 5), while the latter is

based on revelation of the Qur'an. For a Muslim who has been brought up in a Western secular education system would not be familiar with the different nomenclatures that she or he is expected to be aware of. The Muslim whose worldview is based on ontological proximity would not appreciate nor know how to appreciate his or her own worldview, i.e. the one based on Islam, since this has been denied to him/her in his/her educational upbringing. Furthermore, he or she would not be able to evaluate or compare the Western and Islamic nomenclatures because he or she operates on only one set of nomenclatures and value system which he or she had imbibed through his/her education system. Hence, to overcome this shortcoming, it is necessary to introduce Islamic political thought, side by side with Western political thought, in the university curriculum.

In 1990, when IIUM sought to offer an alternative paradigm of higher education curricula in the field of human sciences or more popularly known as social sciences, the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences faced a new challenge. The challenge that the Department of Political Science as well as the other departments faced was to ensure that the correct process of Islamisation took place. When attempts are made to Islamise the body of knowledge, one should not fall into the trap of merely "grafting" and "transplanting" Islamic Political Thought into the contemporary Western Political Thought. What is meant by grafting and transplanting is embedding a perfectly healthy plant into a sick plant, or transplanting a healthy organ into a sick body, replacing a sick organ. The former would probably result in a rotten tree and in the latter, perhaps, death would ensue due to contamination of the healthy organs in the body of a sick person who could not sustain the new organ. Likewise in the case of Political Thought. The area is suffused with Western worldview that is found in all its presentations and interpretations. If the elements of Islamic Political Thought are merely grafted and transplanted into an already "contaminated" conventional Political Thought, the result would be disastrous. Instead of having an integrated and Islamised approach, offering a systematic and holistic understanding of the subject, it would only result in its truncation and confusion.

### **Epistemology and Worldview**

The contemporary Political Thought is imbued with Western philosophical tradition that is a confluence of classical Greek, Greco-Roman, Christian and post-modern, post-existentialist secular ideas rather than of Islamic teachings. Hence, the body of knowledge of contemporary Political Thought that is taught at IIUM should be Islamised. This could be done by putting it through the process of isolation and alienation of foreign elements to Islamic worldview. What is meant by this is that

contemporary Political Thought should be naturalised by using a tool so as to make it appreciable in an alternative paradigm, i.e. the Islamic paradigm. Once this is done, Political Thought would be remoulded and interpreted from the worldview of Islam. Thus the ignorance of the Muslim heritage, secularism and confusion of knowledge that prevail in the modern academia and dominate the contemporary Muslim mind, would be addressed and resolved.

Similar to courses offered by the other departments in Human Sciences, courses in the Department of Political Science are also divided into three main groups: the core courses, which also act as prerequisites to anyone who wants to major in Political Science; the electives; and the specialisation courses. Among the core courses, Political Thought is divided into two parts: Political Thought I and Political Thought II. This is because students have to study the political ideas of various selected major thinkers from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 21<sup>st</sup> century CE. Moreover, students have to study thinkers from both Western and Muslim traditions concurrently when they take these courses. As Political Thought is that area of Political Science that provides philosophical background to the discipline, it plays a foundational role in students' appreciation and understanding of the whole subject. Hence, Political Thought I and II are basic courses that both major and minor students of Political Science must take in order to fulfil their graduation requirements.

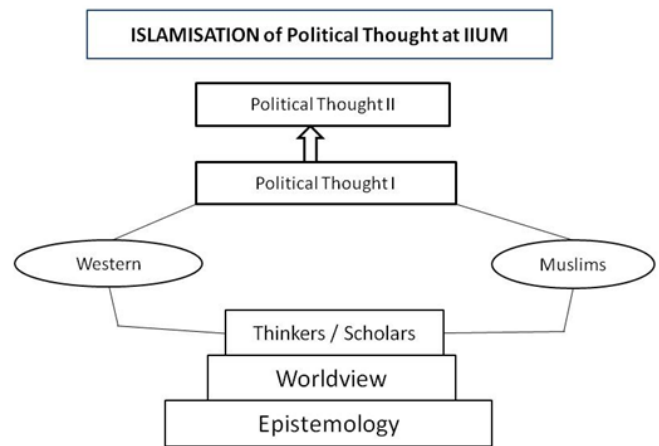
The "tool" that is used to help students identify the foreign elements in Political Thought is epistemology. Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, or a branch of philosophy, that studies and ascertains the sources of knowledge of thinkers and philosophers. It is through the study of epistemology that one is able to comprehend the different ways of thinking and interpretations of knowledge in Human Sciences. Taking this into the context of Political Thought, the study of epistemology will help to identify the basis of the thought process of these thinkers, and by knowing their thought processes, students will be able to comprehend their worldviews. Since worldviews are the framework of the minds, students would then be able to decipher or make sense of and understand the political thought of these thinkers, as they will be able to see the perspectives inherent in their thinking. Having the understanding of different worldviews is important because this would help students to be aware that there are different nomenclatures and paradigms in Political Thought, and that there exists an alternative paradigm which is more holistic.

Take, for example, Political Thought I, which focuses on the classical theories of state and leadership. It ranges from the classical Greek thoughts of Plato and Aristotle, through Greco-Roman philosophers, Christ-



ian theologians, Muslim philosophers and jurists to the pragmatic politics of Machiavelli. There are three objectives of the course: first, to enable students to explain the contributions of major Western and Muslim political thinkers from Plato to Ibn Khaldun; second, to help them demonstrate the epistemological differences between the Western and Muslim political thinkers; and, finally, to endow the capacity in students to trace the concepts of state and leadership of the Western and Muslim Political thinkers. By doing so, the students would eventually be able to see things from the perspective of Islam. Hence, the worldviews of the students of IIUM would be Islamised in the process of doing the course.

The reason why it is important to know the sources of their thinking is because only then we can ascertain factors that may have influenced their minds. This is important because Political Thought is about understanding the theories and concepts that were conceptualised by these thinkers. Once the basis of their thinking has been determined, their worldviews become clearer. The basic framework of their way of thinking and its reflection in their works could be ascertained. When the worldviews of the thinkers have been discerned, students would then be able to see the differences in the Western paradigm and the Islamic paradigm. Eventually, students would be able to evaluate, analyse, compare, criticise and appreciate the political thought of these thinkers. The reason why they are able to appreciate the wealth of knowledge in the Political Thought courses taught at IIUM is because students can make the distinction between why ideas of certain thinkers are more compatible with Islam while others are not. This is because students are able to identify and alienate the foreign elements from the *tawhidic* paradigm and address those unIslamic ideas and replace them with Islamic ideas or, likewise, accept the ideas that are not in opposition to Islam and assimilate them into the new body of knowledge of political thought. At this stage, Islamisation would have taken place and this is what al-Attas meant when he said that Islamisation of present-day knowledge can be achieved only after the “infiltration of key concepts from the Western world” have been isolated; bearing in mind that this isolation process can be attained only if one knows what are the ideas or key concepts that are alien to the *tawhidic* paradigm of Political Thought. Following this isolation process, infusion of “Islamic elements and key concepts” can occur. Hence, teaching epistemology and worldview at the beginning of the course, which is in Political Thought I, will help students to identify two different systems of political thought and enable them to understand their distinctive nomenclatures. This can be summed up in the following diagram:



By: Dr. Alidilberti Dato' Ismail  
Presented on 25/6/2013 at FRIIR 2013

### Selected Thinkers in Political Thought I and Political Thought II Courses

Thinkers studied in Political Thought I are from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC till the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE and they are, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, St. Augustine, al-Farabi, al-Mawardi, Nizam al-Mulk, al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali, St. Thomas Aquinas, Ibn Taymiyya, Marsilio of Padua, Ibn Khaldun and Machiavelli. For Political Thought II, the period studied is from the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE to the present postmodern era of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The thinkers studied in this course are Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Shah Waliullah, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Michel Foucault. These thinkers were selected because of the far reaching implications of their ideas which came to provide the basis and foundation for both the Western and the Islamic paradigms. Furthermore, their political ideas reflect the challenges they faced during their time. These challenges are important to know because the historical development of the political thought of these thinkers would show the changes in the thought pattern of Western as well as Muslim political ideas. Once this is deciphered, it becomes more meaningful to study the political philosophy of later thinkers from both Western and Islamic paradigms in Political Thought II. The courses were designed in such a way that they could be taught either in a chronological order or in an alternate manner of Western and Muslim thinkers.

Plato and Aristotle were chosen to start off the two courses not only because this is the norm everywhere, but also because their political thought have influenced both the Western and Islamic paradigms. Al-Farabi, the *faylasuf*, was the first Muslim thinker in the syllabus; he was chosen mainly because his thought was a confluence of both Plato and Aristotle, but more importantly, he had also Islamised their ideas. It is found that al-Farabi remoulded the theory of state and leadership inherited from Classical Greek political thought to form an Islam-

ic political theory of state and leadership, thus setting the pace for rest of the Muslim political thought thereafter, found in the teachings of the Muslim statesmen and jurists.

Cicero's theory of natural law or law of nature was taught to show the timeless quality of universal human values. His concept of law of nature formulated before the arrival of Christianity or Islam shows the existence of a universal truth and law that is applicable to all mankind throughout the spatiotemporal history. It also played a crucial role in the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau who are studied in Political Thought II. Besides, when his concept of natural law is understood and studied within the context of Islamic worldview, one could justify the applicability of the *syariah* as a universal law, valid notwithstanding time and place.

The idea of the two swords that was the pivot of Medieval Christian political thought is taught in order to illustrate the factors which led to the secularisation of politics in general and Western politics in particular. The impact of the idea of the two swords that places religion alongside politics did not do well in Western political tradition because of Christianity. By having understood this intricacy, one would understand the reasons for the emergence and development of post-structuralism and post-modernism in the aftermath of the Enlightenment.

Machiavellian politics, or more popularly known as power politics, reflects the pragmatic application of the political maxim, end justifies the means. It sets a new tradition of politics that is practiced worldwide nowadays. By studying Machiavelli's political thought, as elucidated in his book *The Prince*, students would be able to make a distinction between normative politics which primarily characterises Islamic political thought, and pragmatic politics that is a distinctive feature of current political practice.

The normative political thought of Muslim thinkers from al-Farabi to Ibn Khaldun taught in Political Thought I reflects the pivotal period of the Muslim civilisation. Their ideas manifest the challenges faced during the Abbasid and the Umayyad periods of Muslim history, which is that of leadership of the *khilafat* system. Contrary to this, the political thought of Muslim thinkers studied in Political Thought II, ranging from Shah Waliullah to Rashid Rida, focuses on the impact of colonialism on the Muslim world. These post-colonial Muslim political thinkers, popularly known as the Muslim modernists, show a different political thought pattern, one that works within the framework or, to be more precise, within the paradigm of the nation-state system introduced through imperialism and colonialism; a thought pattern formulated as a result of the influence of the Western worldview. After having studied Muslim

political thought of the highest and lowest points in Muslim civilisation, students would be able to see a distinctive thought pattern in the development of Muslim political thought. One of the impacts of colonialism on the post-colonial Muslim thinkers is that their minds started revolving around the concept of an Islamic state, something that is palpably absent among those taught in Political Thought I. The dominant idea found among the Muslim thinkers of Political Thought I, is the concept of leadership or *khilafah* as the Muslims were in a leadership role in world civilisation during that period.

### Conclusion

One cannot deny that the knowledge that currently dominates the global higher education curricula and the academia is West-centric. Hence, whenever a student wants to further his/her studies for a bachelor's degree in any of the human science or social science subjects, including Political Science, it will invariably begin with the study of Plato's *Dialogues*.

Likewise, when students are taught at the introductory level about politics, the premise with which the course begins is: *politics is about power*. However, if the introductory course of Political Science undergoes the proper process of Islamisation, it would begin on the premise that *politics is about trust*, and not about power. When this occurs, politics would gain a different meaning as it would then be based on the worldview of *tawhid*, and not on that of secularism. And if this interpretation of politics takes root, the issue of corruption or abuse of power would disappear as people would be conscious of the fact that on the Day of Judgment they will all be held accountable for their actions.

From the analysis above, it can be seen that students of Political Thought I and II should be taught their courses from the premises of epistemology and worldview. However, learning Political Thought from these two premises is not enough, simply because these are only the introductions that act as a processor or tool that is needed for making sense of the world of Political Science and politics. It, therefore, necessarily follows that there must be a content which the students should be familiar with. This body of content can be found in the political thought of various thinkers and philosophers selected to represent certain pattern of thought that reflects their time. Finally, the outcome would be visible if the students of Political Science at IIUM would be able to see things from the point of view of an Islamic perspective.

The model which IIUM offers through its Islamised curricula seeks to rectify the dichotomy of conventional higher education that is not based on the worldview of *tawhid*. By housing the two divisions, namely, Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, under one roof, the Kulliyah aims to integrate both disciplines and act as one, as in the meaning of *tawhid*

## Approaching Teaching and Learning: The Islamic Way

Md. Mahmudul Hasan

Department of English Language and Literature

### Introduction

Given that 60% of world's Muslim population is illiterate (Ramadan 319), it may be difficult for a person without adequate understanding of Islam to comprehend fully the great importance and prominence it has given to knowledge and learning. In view of the enormous emphasis the Qur'an and hadith lay on education, the great British writer Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936) highlights Islam's "command for universal education" and considers the existence of an ignorant Muslim "a contradiction in terms" (10, 13). According to the Qur'an, the most important blessing God bestowed on all prophets is knowledge and wisdom. Verse 2:31 states that after creating Adam God gave him information about all kinds of names, and thus He established the superiority of humans over angels on the basis of this

knowledge distinction. Some other Qur'anic verses, such as 2:251, 3:48, 12:37 and 18:65-66, also testify that prophets invariably received the inestimable blessing of knowledge from God.

As the Qur'an and hadith assert repeatedly, the very purpose for which God sent prophets at different spatiotemporal locations was to liberate humanity from the darkness of ignorance and error to the light of discernment and guidance. And knowledge was the most important, invaluable key for them to perform this responsibility effectively in response to God's call, and it was knowledge that they were commanded to disseminate first and foremost.

In hadith literature, the opening prophetic statement that is categorically mentioned in Chapter on Knowledge is: "Convey from me even if only one

*Continued from page 4*

which reflects the unity of the universe, rather than a separation leading to an incomplete or lopsided worldview, circumscribed by a secular outlook.

According to Alparslan Acikgenc, a worldview is an architectonic whole where its "network of ideas, conceptions, beliefs and aspirations" are organised in a coherent manner (Acikgenc 10). It is a window through which all human beings look through when viewing the world (Aldila 278). It is that which determines the perspectives of the person. Political Thought is a subject that has its own systematic ideas, concepts and theories. In itself it is an architectonic whole. Within it contains many worldviews of political thinkers as to what state and leadership should be like.

In looking at Islamisation of Political Thought courses at IIUM, this essay has shown that epistemology and worldview play the role of tools that lead to the understanding of the thinkers within their nomenclatures. When the thinkers are understood within their nomenclatures or paradigms, their ideas will be better understood, and when this happens, students will then be able to see things in the right perspective as because their worldview has been formulated on the basis of *tawhid*.

In conclusion, what the Department of Political Science strives to do through its two Political Thought courses, Political Thought I and Political Thought II, is to naturalise the alien constituents of political thought that are not based on the Islamic paradigm. These alien elements that contradict *tawhid* can be seen,

identified and isolated because of having placed epistemology and worldview as the first and second premise or the foundation for teaching these courses. Once this is done, and the ideas of these thinkers are elucidated, only then students would be able to critically evaluate or analyse the political thought of these thinkers based on the worldview of *tawhid*. Hence, the formation of the worldviews of the students would become an "architectonic" whole, that is holistic not only because they are able to see things from the perspectives of the philosophers but more importantly they are able to do so because their worldviews are based on *tawhid*.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on "Islamization of Political Thought at IIUM," a paper which was presented at the First World Congress on Integration and Islamicisation of Acquired Human Knowledge (FWCII 2013), organised by IIUM at Prince Hotel and Residence, Kuala Lumpur, in August 2013. Considerable changes were made in the present draft before submitting it for publication in the *Kulliyah Research Bulletin*.

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verse/message” (Bukhari, qtd. in *Mishkat Ul Masabeeh* 58). The fact that this pronouncement constitutes the first hadith mentioned in Chapter on Knowledge indicates that what Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has transmitted, and what the faithful have learnt from him, is knowledge and that they are commanded to spread the same to others. In other words, knowledge is the doorway to the fundamentals of Islam, such as *hidayah* (guidance), *tawhid* (unity of godhead) and *iman* (belief). Once a person possesses the right kind of knowledge, it may lead him/her to embrace the Islamic teachings.

If we analyse the work plan and methodology of prophets and the primordial importance and tremendous value Islam attaches to the acquisition of learning, it will be evident that knowledge was at the base of the prophethood of all messengers and that in Islam it is inevitable for performing one’s duty as God’s *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth. Needless to say, the first revelation God sent to Prophet Muhammad is “iqra” (read), that is, a command to seek knowledge, and the same command has been repeated in many other Qur’anic verses and prophetic traditions in various ways. Accordingly, becoming engaged in the practice of education and instruction is considered an essential act of worship and obedience to God’s command. While rituals like *salah* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *hajj* (pilgrimage), praising and celebrating God’s glory orally and similar practices are also important and sometimes seem to overshadow other critical responsibilities, the pre-eminence of the role of knowledge in Islam is undeniable.

### Dignity of Scholars

As God has honoured prophets with the attribution of knowledge, He has equally increased the dignity of those who are endowed with it. Verse 58:11 of the Qur’an states that knowledgeable people have a higher status in Islam.<sup>1</sup> Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “The superiority of an ‘alim (scholar) over an ‘abid (devotee) is like the prominence of a full moon over the stars” (Tirmidhi, qtd. in *Mishkat Ul Masabeeh* 61); “The superiority of an ‘alim over an ‘abid is like my superiority over the lesser amongst you (in good deeds)” (Daremi, qtd. in *Mishkat Ul Masabeeh* 62). The eminence of the people of understanding in Islam is not simply for the knowledge and information they may carry, but mainly for its commendable outcome. If knowledge is compounded by good action and by laudable character, only then its possessors will be worthy of the honour Islam accords them.

An interpretation of verse 39:9<sup>2</sup> of the Qur’an may suggest that, in terms of behaviour, moral conduct, human relations and interactions and other matters of lifestyle, the people who possess knowledge are

supposed to excel those who do not. According to verse 35:28,<sup>3</sup> one obvious corollary of knowledge is piety and God-consciousness, and the scholars are expected to be mindful of the act of servitude to God. Verse 3:18<sup>4</sup> associates the people of knowledge with the testifying of articles of faith and with the attribute of justice. Needless to say, knowledgeable people are supposed to have a higher moral, ethical ground and, compared to ordinary people, shoulder greater responsibilities religiously and intellectually. Their elevated status is attached with and conditional to their superior conduct, higher merit and more impressive virtues and to the services they would render to society and to humanity as a whole.

### “Scholars” Not Up To the Mark

Unfortunately, in today’s world, scholars that the Qur’an and hadith celebrate are not in great number. An overwhelming number of so-called scholars are perhaps equipped with information about some facts and figures, or many of them may even carry knowledge of ethics and religion, but their conduct and moral behaviour do not satisfy the higher standard that Islam sets for the rightly-guided, true scholars. Despite all the knowledge they may possess, most of them do not seem to have developed an internally set moral compass that could function as their guide and help them distinguish what is right and what is wrong and act accordingly.

In the areas of religion and ethics, in many cases, there seems to be a clear gap between knowledge of ethics and religion and being an ethical and religious person. In this regard, Harvard professor Harry Lewis’ observation may constitute a wake-up call for all of us: “Society is going to hell in a hand basket, and the great universities are going to get there first” (108). In other words, even though decadence and moral degradation has gripped the entire fabric of the social system, universities are the worst affected by this tsunami of decay or even, perhaps, are the root causes of this phenomenon.

What is more ominous is the fact that, university lecturers may not necessarily be taken as role models whom the learners can emulate. As Lewis states, “Professors are hired as scholars and teachers, not as mentors of values and ideals to the young and confused” (4). As a result, university students are not adequately grounded in moral and religious teachings and their moral crisis has perhaps reached all-time high and many seats of learning turned into demonstrable sites of moral degeneration. The youth culture and lifestyle and leisure activities that many of the students practice are complete anathema to decent people. When these students graduate, leave the university and enter the world of work and become part of the wider world, they do not contribute much to elevating and ameliorating the moral and social

conditions of people around them.

As regards universally accepted moral principles and code of ethics, we do not see much difference between university graduates and unlettered people. Many bigger crimes are being perpetrated around the world by people with impressive academic credentials. The harsh reality is that, the educated gentry do not inhabit a higher moral ground and in many cases they are worse than the non-educated. In social life, it may appear that many people without any exposure to higher education are generally more polite, humble, caring, selfless and less hypocritical. Even if we believe that people in the wider society are also not up to the mark morally or religiously, people affiliated with the great seats of learning have no greater claim on “moral and ethical armour capable of withstanding the blandishments of greed” (Meisel 9). Greed for money and status and lust for power and other materialistic ambitions seem to determine students’ educational intensity, career choice and work trajectory. In most cases, students in Muslim societies, especially those in the humanities and social sciences, are exposed to alien ideas, led into a moral maze and eventually estranged from their own cultural and religious traditions. The inevitable consequence of it is identity crisis, cultural waywardness and ideological vagrancy.

God says in the Qur’an: “Where are you going?” (81:26). This stark reminder is very much relevant to the crisis in the modern education system that is largely based on a secular, atheistic philosophy and hence is not producing morally upright or righteous individuals. Many parents are ready to spend huge amount of money to send their children to renowned seats of learning, and educators are desperate to expose students to higher learning. However, if education does not make much difference in their moral or religious character, what is the point of all the hype and hysteria for learning? Perhaps, one lesson of the Qur’anic verse (81:26) mentioned above is that Muslims are supposed to reflect on current teaching and learning practices and find a remedy to the moral and religious crisis in education. Some Muslims may swim in a sea of complacency and point their finger at the West for this wholesale degradation, but Taha J. al Alwani says that Muslims are “now full partners in the worldwide crisis” (87). So Muslims are also responsible for this education crisis, and they should take an equal or greater role in addressing the issue.

### Remedy

The most dominant trend around the world to address the crisis in education is the faith and learning integration approach. It is felt across religious spectrums that there is a need to integrate education and religious belief and commitment. Pickthall argues for the abolition of

the rift between religious and secular education. He maintains, “In Islam, there are no such terms as secular and religious, for true religion includes the whole sphere of man’s activities” (9). He adduces that, in the past masjid was the centre of educational activities, and subjects like “chemistry and physics, botany, medicine and astronomy” were taught at masjid which “welcomed to its precincts all the knowledge of the age from every quarter” (9). If this model can be revived especially in Muslim societies, education will come under the purview of religious ethos again and the graduates will hopefully not isolate learning from its social and religious contexts, and from their moral and religious obligations.

Like other “Islamisation of knowledge”<sup>5</sup> scholars, Alwani locates the remedy to the crisis in education in the *tawhidi* episteme that espouses a link between education and the Creator, the “One and Unique, the Originator of all things and their Provider” (84). Alwani argues that the *tawhidi* framework of education would “result in the production of proper, discerning, and purposeful knowledge” (84). He divides education into two forms of reading – revelation and real-existential – and argues that the main reason for the intellectual crisis in the present era is the bifurcation between these two readings. In fact, the crux of the Islamisation of knowledge undertaking is to bring together the readings of revelation and real-existential.

The most important aspects of integration of faith and learning are teacher-student dynamic and discipline (Lessard-Clouston 116). While in the Islamisation of knowledge discourse, the latter is given some attention, the former is still neglected. The teacher-student dynamic is mainly concerned with the role of the teacher in an educational setting. The teacher has the responsibility not only to transmit to students what is there in the texts or to provide them with facts and figures. S/he has a responsibility to look after the moral health of students as well, which Mohd. Kamal Hassan regards as “Islamicisation of the Self” that can be delivered through “Jihād al-Nafs (striving against the base desires) and Tathir al-Qalb (purification of the Heart)” (56). If this programme of fighting against the base desires and purifying the hearts of students is not undertaken by the teacher in the classroom setting and beyond, s/he may end up producing graduates who, as the Qur’an states, will know some outward facts of this life but will be heedless about life hereafter and about associated obligations (30:6-7).<sup>6</sup> A stringent analysis of the Qur’anic statement contained in verses 30:6-7 may suggest that people who have knowledge of only this world (real-existential) and are forgetful of the life hereafter, are not true scholars. In other words, if lecturers are providing students with mere facts and figures about the corporeal world, they are not engaged in

producing scholars in the Qur'anic sense of the term. In order for teachers and lecturers to produce morally and religiously grounded students, they should not avoid the responsibility of instilling moral and religious values as well as the right understanding of human nature and purpose of life in them.

The concept of *ta'leem* (teaching) in its various derivatives has been associated with God in the Qur'an about twenty times. For example, verses 96:4-5<sup>7</sup> say that God taught human beings through the pen and taught them what they did not know, and verses 55:1-2<sup>8</sup> state that He taught humans the Qur'an and regards this act of teaching as a manifestation of His mercy upon them. Prophet Muhammad clearly identifies himself as a teacher, as his famous statement – "I have been sent as a teacher" (Daremi, qtd. in *Mishkat Ul Masabeeh* 69) – amply suggests. It is important to note that, as verses 2:129 and 2:151<sup>9</sup> of the Qur'an indicate, one important work plan of the Prophet as a teacher is "purification" which is also associated with God the Supreme Teacher: "God purifies whom He pleases" (4:49).

So if Muslim teachers and lecturers want to emulate the work plan of God and His Prophet concerning the grand calling of teaching, they must take this task of moral purification seriously. Tazkiyah al-Nafs or the purification of the soul involves moulding the praiseworthy character of students and help them remove all destructive and blameworthy traits from their personalities. If teachers stop their professional duty by simply teaching the course contents to their students and do not guide them to become better human beings, then they may swerve from the Islamic pedagogical practices and may not be able to prepare the future generations who will know and realise themselves and become the agents of change.

## Conclusion

In this essay I have shown how the absence of moral and religious values in education has undermined the noble calling of teaching and learning. Contemporary education does not seem to have made comprehensive moral and ethical impact on its recipients. It is high time to reflect on this grave phenomenon and take appropriate measures so that all our energy and efforts employed in educational activities do not go in vain.

In the Islamisation of knowledge movement, emphasis is given to Islamising the content of various disciplines. However, I argue that an equal importance should be laid on the teacher-student dynamic. Teachers should be actively involved in the purification of the hearts of their students and in moulding their characters. In this regards, Syed Ali Ashraf says: "The teacher has to train the sensibility of students in such a manner that students do not succumb to propaganda and always evaluate the genuineness of a human condition with

reference to the absolute norm of human conduct" (54). Our students are exposed to many untoward influences ("propaganda") both from the real and virtual worlds, so as teachers and lecturers we have a duty to guide them, with our knowledge and experience, to the right path and protect them from all immoral and irreligious temptations and predators; only then they will be able to soar really high both in knowledge and character.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Verse 58:11 states: "Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who have been given knowledge, by degrees."

<sup>2</sup> "Say: Are those who know and those who do not know equal, the same?" (39:9).

<sup>3</sup> "Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge" (35:28).

<sup>4</sup> "There is no god but He: That is the witness of God, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise" (3:18).

<sup>5</sup> This term refers to an intellectual undertaking that seeks to look at human knowledge from Islamic perspectives. However, the usage of the term itself is debatable.

<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an states: "... most people do not know. They know the outward of this world's life, but of the hereafter they are absolutely heedless" (30:6-7).

<sup>7</sup> "[God] Who taught by the pen, He taught human which they did not know" (96:4-5).

<sup>8</sup> "The Most Merciful [God] taught the Qur'an" (55:1-2).

<sup>9</sup> "Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely You art the Mighty, the Wise" (2:129); "Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know" (2:151).

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## Religion and Governance: New Typology, A Philosophical Inquiry

Maszlee Malik

Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh

### Introduction

In postmodern times there has been much empirical evidence to indicate that religions and faiths play a pro-active role in the civil society, in the development of societies in particular, which is a major factor in the development of a country as well as its governance (Ghaus-Pasha). Religion as a form of ethical doctrine could potentially provide the “internal good” for development through its doctrines on social cohesion, mutual co-operation and virtue-based community. In practice, the process of governance is not an axiologically neutral human activity, but like other activities, it is pregnant with values and ethics (Cortina).

Consequently, apart from the mainstream liberal economic ethics (i.e. efficiency, competitiveness, economic growth, human rights, etc.), there are other traditional, culturally-constructed and religious values that are worth incorporating into the discourse in order to respond to the realities of each society for it to reach an acceptable and efficient solution for itself. It is through this premise that the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* is worth employing to explain how ethics and tradition can encourage a society to cooperate in attaining *telos* (internal good).

### Culture and Development

Stiglitz argues that cultural values should be preserved due to their essential function as a cohesive force for development at a time when many other values are weakening. Rationally, culture and values that enhance both human and social capital will generate public order through the production of good citizens who live in mutual cooperation and assistance, transcending conflicts that mount up, to establish social stability (Coleman 94).

Casson points out that culture as “collective subjectivity” will enhance efficiency through good behaviour, integrity, honesty, trust and cooperation, which will have a great impact on economic performance. In the same way, Throsby suggests that culture will provide objectives for group development through certain worldviews, values and beliefs, and it will also affect economic efficiency by affecting behaviour, innovation, group dynamics and decision-making processes.

It is because of this reason that UNESCO suggested in its 29<sup>th</sup> General Conference Report that culture (if it is strengthened and supported) could be an enormous potential key element, as a social capital, in the struggle against poverty. The same concern was voiced by the then President of the World Bank, James

Wolfensohn, who emphasised the essentiality of the independence of growth and social development and further added that, “Without parallel social development, there will be no satisfactory economic development” (Kliksberg 12).

On another occasion, Wolfensohn stressed the significance of social development through social justice and equality to complement the institutional and structural reform for political-economic growth and human prosperity. Social capital and culture, thus, are key components of these interactions (Kliksberg 12). It should be noted that these differences also highlight the distinction between “economic growth and development.”

### Religion as *nomos*

Recent global religious uprisings have demanded a restructuring of faiths and values in the fields from which they were once banished (Casanova; Berger). As a result, exploration of the possibility of incorporating culture, or religion specifically, into the public sphere is no longer a taboo. However, this new uprising, or what is termed by Micklethwait and Wooldridge as the return of God or “God is back,” emerges in a different form from that it took during the pre-Enlightenment periods.

This global phenomenon is represented by the re-appearance of religions in the form of ethics, values and many other functioning forms rather than the previous institutional structure. This new form of religion usurps the realm of politics, economy, education, international affairs and governance without diminishing the existing structures. Religions from this new perspective are no longer mere beliefs in miraculous rescue from above (*deus ex machina*), but rather a vehicle for human betterment (Falk 32).

These elements give the human race a “sacred canopy” against the threat of the lack of meaning (*anomie*) of the world and will, accordingly, lead society to appreciate the innate precariousness of the *nomos* (meaningful order) (Berger 28). For example, the relation between Islamic values and the issue of governance that is the product of Islamic worldview has a great deal of historical experience that is worth exploring. The same can be applied to the rich Confucianism-oriented Chinese culture and philosophy derived from the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. Similarly, the Dharma-based Indian values articulated by Kautilya and Ashoka regarding political and administrative affairs are additional invaluable sources by which ideals can be enhanced. The list goes on to include other

cultures and faiths.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, various researchers have dedicated their studies to the new role that religions can play in development.<sup>2</sup> Many empirical studies undertaken on this topic indicate that religions, through faith-based or faith-inspired organisations and movements, have made significant contributions to development. Amongst their outstanding contributions, those often quoted by many researchers, have mainly been about tackling poverty, improving education, providing welfare services to the community, enhancing humanitarian work and encouraging political participation in the struggle against corruption and misadministration.

### Positioning Religion in the Framework of Development

Under the modernity project, religion has been perceived as a dogma that is against “rational” or “universal” (liberal) values which is not welcomed in the public sphere, or more precisely in the political-economic fields. Such arguments have to be understood from the historical perspective of the failure of church-state domination over the people. Initially, since the decline of religious domination on Western soil, the constant struggle to eliminate religion as a whole from the public sphere became a norm in the major discourse of philosophers, scholars and most Western thinkers.

Despite the initial goal of those who waged this struggle to constrain and deprive the hegemony of religion in secular arts and sciences, and other “worldly” realms, Kant brought it to a new dimension with a compromising formulation. Through his transcendental idealism, “religion” was acknowledged as the only means to engage lofty metaphysical issues, but inappropriate for all other matters. For everything, save metaphysics, reason is both necessary and sufficient, and it is with this division of intellectual labour that Western modernity was founded. With this position taken by Kant, restricting religion to an important set of metaphysical concerns, it protects its privileges against state intrusion, but restricts its activity and influence to this specialised sphere (Lincoln). The Kantian approach, nevertheless, is far from useful in explaining the current global trend of the return of religion in many “secular” territories. In reality, this return goes beyond the “transcendental” realm and encroaches upon the area from which faiths were once totally banned.

Religion, from the consequential and functional perspectives, will lead society to appreciate the innate precariousness of the *nomos* (meaningful order) (Tipton 282-84). Equally, from a phenomenological perspective, religion gives the human race a “sacred canopy” against the threat of the meaninglessness (*anomie*) of the world (Berger 28). However, the modern positivistic approach to the discourse of development and

governance which devalues religion and other normative elements to stress the quantifiable aspects of human experience, rather than the meaning, will never be an efficient tool for the functionalist view of religion.

The only choice is to shift towards more interpretative and consequentialistic approaches, which seek to interpret human action and focus on understanding the meanings people give to their own actions and the consequence of those actions to development and good governance. The emphasis hence is moved from mere observation and description (what is) to understanding (why and how), hence challenging the conventional value-free proposition of positivism (Thompson and Woodword 52-53).

With regard to the “why” and “how” as mentioned above, philosophy of ethics represents a useful tool for understanding the significant nature of religion. For instance, the philosophy of ethics raises the question of goodness. This question induces many ethical theories which lead to different conclusions or answers to the question of “What should one do?” or “How should one live?” (i.e. Kantian ethics, Aristotelian ethics, Mill’s utilitarianism, etc.). At the same time, it also examines moral claims which underpin a society’s core values and social norms. Akin to other ethical and moral theories, religion as another source of ethics and established doctrine provides substantial answers to those questions. By applying the typology of “tradition” (as per the definition by Alasdair MacIntyre), religion is to be understood as a conception of “what good living is about,” which is then expressed through social practices performed by believers. Within such concepts, we could conceptualise an early assumption of how religion (as a set of ethical propositions along with its theoretical structure) would fit into the discourse of development and governance.

Similar to the “tradition” typology of religion, Lincoln’s deconstruction of religion brings another holistic view in explaining the nature of religion. In defining the concept, Lincoln attributes four domains of what he calls polythetic and flexible, as the characteristics of religion: (i) It entails a transcendental discourse (from its claims to authority and truth); (ii) It imposes a set of practices with the goal of producing a proper world according to the religious discourses to which the practices are connected; (iii) It requires a community whose members construct their identity with reference to the religious discourse and its practices; (iv) It depends on institutions that regulate religious discourse, practices and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendental value (Lincoln 5-7). Lincoln also implicitly constructs religion with a beyond-transcendental and more comprehensive framework. Such a definition also implies a maximalist type

of religion, unlike the Kantian and other minimalists.

Furthermore, religion as a form of ethical doctrine could profoundly act as an agent to attain the internal good in development through its doctrines on social cohesion, mutual co-operation and virtue-based community. Practically, the process of development is not an axiologically neutral human activity, but like other activities, it abounds with values and ethics (Cortina). Apart from mainstream liberal economic ethics (i.e. efficiency, competitiveness, economic growth, human rights, etc), there are also other culturally traditional ethics and religious ethics that are worth incorporating into the discourse. It is from this premise that the Aristotelian concept of *praxis* is worth employing to explain how ethics and tradition could encourage society to cooperate in the attainment of *telos* (internal good), and the same goes for religion.

## Conclusion

Following this line of argument, governance encompasses the discourse of politics, economics and public administration, and is thus value-loaded at its most elementary level and shaped by individual values derived from individual worldviews, as part of individual social construct. Since factors affecting worldviews differ, different worldviews exist leading to different "systems" for different people (Asutay). Religion and faith are amongst the major determining factors that fundamentally construct worldviews.

The meaning (*nomos*) that religion brings through its ontological dimension leads to the construction of distinguishing narratives to development through the governance process. Accordingly, this distinctive religion-based framework represents the endogeneity of non-Western discourses on governance, hence creating narratives instead of the meta-narrative of the modernist projection of universal values. According to this framework, the acknowledgement of other worldviews allows religion to play a role in the creation of alternative means in the realm of governance.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Peter Harris, *Foundations of Public Administration: A Comparative Approach*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 1990; Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Oxford UP, 1999; George H. Frederickson, "Confucius and the Moral Basis of Bureaucracy," *Administration and Society* 33.6 (2002): 610-28; and Rosita Dellios, *Governance in 21st Century China: What would Confucius Say?* Humanities and Social Sciences papers, Bond University, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> See, Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Habubullah Khan and Omar Bashir, *Religion and Development: Are They Complementary?* (U21 Global Working Paper Series, No. 006/2008, Graduate School for Global Leaders, Singapore, 2008.

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### Fourth International Conference on Arabic Language and Literature

*Asem Shehadeh Saleh Ali*  
*Department of Arabic Language and Literature*

The Department of Arabic Language and Literature, IIUM organised its fourth international conference, with the theme “Teaching of Arabic Language and Literature for Special Purposes,” from 15-17 May 2013. It was officiated by the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Malaysia, His Excellency Fahad Abdullah Al Rahid. In his opening address, which was read out by the Cultural Attaché of the Embassy, Dr. Abdurrahman Mohammed Fusayil, the Ambassador commended Malaysia for its efforts in promoting the teaching and learning of Arabic at various levels of its academic institutions, from madrasas to schools to universities. “There are many initiatives adopted to promote the Arabic language in the community, including through Arabic language classes in universities, radio and television programmes, and magazines,” he said in a note of thanks.

189 presenters, including 116 international scholars, took part in the conference. The foreign presenters came from Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Thailand, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE, the UK and the US. The number of participants from overseas was 110.

In his speech, then dean of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), Prof. Emeritus Datuk Paduka Dr. Mahmood Zuhdi Abd. Majid, said that the Arabic language was taught in Malaysia not only to learn about religion but for economic and political purposes as well.

Saudi Arabian Embassy religious adviser, Dr. Abdurrahman Mohammed Al-Bulaihi, was also present at the occasion.

### Thirteenth International Symposium on the Contributions of Psychology to Peace

*Ishtiaq Hossain, Selvaraj Ramasamy and Ida Bt. Shukor*  
*Department of Political Science*

The scenic Gombak campus of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) played host to the 13th International Symposium on the Contributions of Psychology to Peace from 10-15 June, 2013. A biennial event, the international symposium was organised by the Departments of Psychology and Political Science, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), IIUM. Prof. Mahmood Zuhdi, who was the Dean of KIRKHS at the time, welcomed the local and foreign participants to the symposium. Prof. Ahmed Faris Ismail, then Deputy Rector (Research and Development) of IIUM, delivered the inaugural remarks.

A special talk was delivered by Dato’ Tengku Abd. Ghaffar Tengku Mohamed, while Prof. Dr. Chandra Muzaffar and Professor Dr. Anouk Ride delivered the keynote addresses. Dato’ Tengku Abd. Ghaffar, who was Malaysia’s representative at the peace talks between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), dwelt on Malaysia’s role as a mediator between the two sides in the conflict. He provided a fascinating description of the ups-and-downs in the negotiation of framework agreement for bringing peace to Southern Mindanao.

In his keynote address, Prof. Dr. Chandra Muzaffar raised the issue of hegemony of a single power in international affairs. According to him, this state of affairs is a threat to world peace. Therefore, he emphasised the need for ending the prevailing hegemony. He also stressed that religion, which incorporates the notion of “boundaries” in its philosophy, may be able to play a vital role in bringing peace to the troubled world. Indeed, in Islam, as in Buddhism, he explained, the principle of boundaries is closely linked to peace. According to him, the great psychological strengths inherent in our respective faiths is a fundamental prerequisite for global peace in a world that is moving from hegemony to multi-polarity. This task may be difficult but it may well be one of the most important tasks before contemporary scholars and activists. In the second keynote address, Prof. Dr. Anouk Ride focused on the possibilities of peace and conflict in post-natural disaster scenarios. She emphasised the need for educating the public on the potentials of negative impacts of natural disasters. She also called for taking initiatives in the following three areas: increasing local resilience, improving relief capabilities and facilitating relocation of people from the vulnerable areas. Using narratives

## Faith on Film

Farizah Jaafar

*Department of English Language and Literature*

On 20-23 September 2013, two significant events – the Islamic World Film Festival (IWFF) and the Islamic Youth Short Film Competition (IYSFC) – were held concurrently in Kuala Lumpur in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

IWFF was the main event while IYSFC was a sub-event meant especially for Malaysian students. Winners of the IYSFC later competed with over 50 international film entries from 10 countries at the festi-

val (IWFF). The two festivals promoted good values and projected Islamic faith on film in four genres:

- Feature film
- Short film
- Animation and
- Documentary.

The festival themed “Faith on Film” was meant to create a platform for a specific group of film-makers who are concerned with the Islamic faith, and to showcase their

*Continued from page 12*

of victims of natural disasters, Prof. Dr. Ride explained how the experiences of natural disasters can be unique and, in fact, may even lead to creating bonds of friendship and cooperation among the victims.

The symposium brought together leading academics, activists and students from IIUM and other institutions of higher learning. Around 40 participants from home and abroad, including Canada, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, the US, the UK and Venezuela attended the symposium. A total of 27 papers in six sessions were presented at the symposium. These papers highlighted such issues as the use of non-violent techniques in conflict resolution and conflict management, creating peace by using respect for human rights and by observing tolerance. Natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis leave behind traumatised survivors: this important issue was dealt with by various paper presenters. Participants from Japan discussed the impacts of the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011, on its survivors. The important subject of Disaster Management received due attention from the participants. A number of papers focused on the positive roles played by psychologists in resolving various conflicts in different parts of the world. The symposium also organised two dialogue sessions with the participants. The first of these sessions was devoted to a discussion on “Islam, Peace and Conflict,” and the second was devoted to “Development of Peace Psychology Programmes.” Both sessions were lively and were indeed highly successful in terms of making their impact on the participants. The participants engaged openly with the panellists. In particular, the foreign participants demonstrated keen interest in understanding the role of Islam in conflict resolution and in bringing peace to a volatile world. The panellists of the session on “Islam, Peace and Conflict,” Prof. Dr. Ibrahim M. Zein, Prof. Dr. Waleed Farris and

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wahabuddin Ra’ees, as well as the session’s moderator, Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten, were successful in engaging with the participants in an enlightened way. Peace education is an important means to create the necessary human resources for dealing with outbreak of conflicts and bring peace. In this connection, there was an enthusiastic response to the announcement that the Departments of Psychology and Political Science, IIUM, would soon jointly offer a programme on Peace and Conflict Resolution. When offered, this would be a unique programme in Malaysia, and perhaps in the world, with a distinct Islamic characteristic. Parallel to the academic sessions, a poster exhibition was also organised during the entire duration of the symposium. The participants of the symposium were taken on a tour of the museums in Kuala Lumpur and the historical sites of Malacca.

The symposium had some immediate objectives, such as creating awareness on issues related to Peace Psychology among the academics and the practitioners. The organisers also aimed at promoting networking among researchers and practitioners, and in developing awareness on Islam’s role in peace-making. It is hoped that this symposium would continue to be held on an annual basis with full cooperation from the two academic departments of IIUM, and even in cooperation with Psychology departments at other universities in Malaysia. In addition, getting affiliation with some of the reputable organisations such as the American Psychological Association, publishing research works in well recognised academic journals, uploading the abstracts of papers presented at the symposium in designated websites within the circle of psychologists and, finally, introducing a system for rotating and electing the committee members will ensure continuous success for the symposium. It was declared that the 14<sup>th</sup> symposium in the series will be held in South Africa, in 2015.

works. Besides facilitating the need to understand Islam and Muslims in general, the screening of these films was also intended to dispel the negative perception of Islam and to create awareness among Muslims of the struggles and plights faced by different Muslim communities around the world. At the same time, it was a drive to develop and nurture new talents among Muslim youths worldwide in relation to the production of *syariah*-compliant films and documentaries.

The events conducted workshops, talks and screenings that taught participants the art of producing films and stressed the importance of incorporating positive values in compliance with the *syariah*. Two separate award ceremonies were held for the two film events. IYSFC Award Ceremony was graced by IIUM Minister Mentor YB Khairy Jamaluddin on September 21, 2013 and IWFF Award Ceremony was graced by the Director-General of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia on January 4, 2014. The list of winners could be viewed at the IWFF website at [iwff.org.my](http://iwff.org.my).

Programme Director, and Professor of English, Dr. Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf who mooted the idea (the original name was Islamic Film Festival) in conjunction with the First World Congress on Integration and Islamisation of Acquired Human Knowledge (chaired by Prof. Tan Sri Kamal Hassan), said that videos and films were currently powerful media tools to communicate effectively with the larger audience. Generation Y in particular, she added, would warm up to visuals and there is already a general trending of film festivals worldwide.

Films in the Muslim world, according to Prof. Nor Faridah, have not been seriously studied and she sees the need for IIUM to offer film-related skill courses such as script writing, directing and film-making in general. "We can then encourage our students to share their Islamic knowledge with the rest of the world through films," she said. It is therefore very timely that the university has recently set up a centre for Islamic art and culture headed by Dr. Mahadi J Murat, and she believes that the achievements of IYSFC and IWFF will be brought to a new height with the formation of the Centre.

"We have to be very clear that all films or any form of culture performance should follow the *syariah*-compliance framework which was thoroughly discussed and debated by Islamic scholars from IIUM and practitioners from the film industry, taking into account the existing guidelines from TV stations and state *fatwa* on Islamic entertainment while we were preparing for IYSFC and IWFF." While acknowledging that the framework is not yet as perfect as desired, Prof. Nor Faridah expresses a fervent hope that it will improve consistently with the resolution of more Islamic-related issues and controversies.

Prof. Nor Faridah stressed that Muslims should not be afraid of controversies. "We need to address these issues Islamically. Otherwise, we will not be part of the solution but part of the problem, when every controversy is avoided without addressing it appropriately." She added that the journey has not been all easy. "At the beginning, we had our doubts and apprehensions – we had no funds to begin with and we worried about the response: would there be anyone keen to submit faith-based films? By the grace of Allah, the two film events took place with much support from the university's top management especially the President, the Honourable Rector and the office of Deputy Rector for Internationalisation, Industry and Community Relations, Professor Aziz Berghout. Professor Ibrahim Zein, the Dean of our kulliyah, and the two Deans before him – Dr. Badri Najib and Emeritus Professor Dato' Paduka Dr. Mahmood Zuhdi – were also very supportive of the two film festivals. For a first timer, getting over 50 entries for each festival was truly encouraging for us. There were over 100 undergraduates involved in the two events. I would never forget the look of the student leader who actually wept on the evening of IYSFC Award Ceremony telling me that he never thought he and his friends could pull through such a massive project. If anything good that came out for our students, it was giving them that sense of confidence and achievement that they *could*."

Prof. Faridah also pointed out that the other good thing that came out of the two film events was the making of IIUM's filmmakers! Three of IIUM academics, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamaroniah from the Comparative Religion Department (KIRKHS), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fauzan Noordin and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roslina Othman (both from KICT) won awards for two film categories. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fauzan and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Roslina, with their student team, won a Bronze Award for an animated film on Ashabul Kahfi and a Promising Award for an animated film on al Biruni. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamaroniah won a Promising Award for her documentary film dealing with street kids in Cotabato, Philippines. They were three of five Malaysians who made it to the winning list.

Prof. Faridah believes that there are other untapped talents out there on our IIUM campuses. She hopes that the future festivals will discover more talents from IIUM as part of us sharing our knowledge and how we perceive the world.

Prof. Faridah said that both the events capitalised on IIUM's own resources (judges, Islamic contents advisors and film critics were mostly from the university; details of staff involved in the making of the two events are available on the [iwff](http://iwff.org.my) website), and although outsiders may see this as strange, it is important that for the first festival we are clear about where we are going.



## First World Congress on Integration and Islamicisation of Acquired Human Knowledge (FWCII-2013)

*Aimillia Mohd Ramli*

*Department of English Language and Literature*

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) recently organised the First World Congress on Integration and Islamicisation of Acquired Human Knowledge (FWCII-2013) at Prince Hotel and Residence, Kuala Lumpur. The theme of the conference was “Constructing the Alternative Paradigm of Tawhid.” Held from 23 to 25 September, it was officiated by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato’ Sri Mohd. Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak, at the CAC, IIUM Main Campus. Amongst those who spoke at the opening ceremony were IIUM’s new President, Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Dr. Rais Yatim and IIUM’s Rector, Prof. Dato’ Sri Dr. Zaleha Kamaruddin. The occasion was also graced by IIUM’s former Rectors, Prof. Emeritus Abuhamid Abusulayman, Prof. Dato Syed Arabi Idid and Prof. Tan Sri Kamal Hassan, who was also the chairperson of the organising committee.

One of the main objectives of the congress was to bring together Muslim scholars, scientists, academicians, professionals and experts from various parts of the world who have been involved in the project of integrating and Islamicising human knowledge (IOHK). In order to fulfil this objective, the congress invited prominent scholars from both Malaysia and abroad. Keynote speakers at the congress included Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, the Chairperson of MERCY Malaysia; Prof. Dr. Muhaya Muhammad, the chief ophthalmologist at the Prince Court Medical Centre and one of Malaysia’s foremost motivational speakers; Prof. Dr. Omar H. Kasule of King Fahd Medical City; Mr. Muhammad Akram Khan, the former Deputy Auditor General, Government of Pakistan; Prof. Dr. A.R. Momin of the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, India; Prof. Dr. Mohamed Aslam Haneef, the Director of the Centre for Islamic Economics, IIUM; Prof. Dr. Malik Badri, a Muslim psychologist from the University of Ahfad, Sudan; and Emeritus Prof. Datuk Osman

Bakar, the Director and Chair Professor at the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Centre for Islamic Studies (SOAS-CIS), University Brunei Darussalam. The paper presenters also came from various countries, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan and the United States.

The congress was aimed at forging new and transnational strategies that would result in discursive and intellectual constructions of the *Tawhidic* paradigm. This would in turn create an alternative model of human knowledge leading to the reconstruction of Muslim society, culture and civilisation while, at the same time, assisting in the reform of worldwide disorder caused by the current secular humanistic model. Correspondingly, the congress was meant to serve as a platform for IIUM staff to showcase their achievements in terms of teaching, research and publications related to IOHK.

The importance for Muslims to shoulder the responsibility of integrating and Islamicising human knowledge and being involved in social activism was emphasised on the first day of the congress. Prof. Abusulayman made a general call for Muslim social scientists to play an important part in the reconstruction of Muslim society. This was followed by Prof. Jemilah who enlightened the audience on the contributions that Muslims could make for the physical benefit of the *ummah* through financial donations that could come in various forms, such as *zakat* and *wakaf*. Scenes from refugee camps across the world, including those in Turkey and Thailand, which Prof. Jemilah screened during her talk, were certainly an eye-opener for many in the audience. While she stressed that the amount of donations made by Muslims across the world to Islamic non-governmental agencies had increased, the number of global and local crises involving Muslims had also doubled from previous decades. From calls made by Dr.

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The parameters must be set right at the outset and since all of us are trained in the triple I’s, it was easier to work on the *syariah* compliance framework (most of our colleagues are *syariah*-compliance Advisors to various agencies locally and internationally). We must be grateful to Allah for this privilege. However, the two festivals did not compromise on the quality of a good film and so, for each category we invited a judge or two who came from the film industry.

KIRKHS as a kulliyah played a pivotal role in both the events, since academics involved in various

capacities in the festivals came mainly from this Kulliyah, either serving as Advisors of Islamic contents or as Judges who would scrutinise films looking for values which are in line with Islamic teaching.

This is just the beginning and there is still room for improvement but if we can incorporate faith on film, then we will have a dynamic medium for reminding people to act morally and constantly remember Allah.

*Wallahualam.*

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## PhD Thesis Abstract: An Analysis of Islamic Conceptualisations of Press Freedom in Malaysia<sup>1</sup>

Nerawi Sedu

Department of Communication

This research investigated the conceptions of press freedom from the Islamic perspective. It examined how certain segments of Malaysian society, including government officers, religious leaders, members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and members of political parties, perceive press freedom in the country. Compared to previous studies on media freedom or press freedom in Malaysia, this study offered a comprehensive analysis of variables significantly related to the conceptualisation and practice of press freedom, which include economic development, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and globalisation. One significant difference between this study and previous studies was the specific examination of Islamic conceptions of press freedom, which represents a major contribution to existing knowledge. As Malaysia is a complex multi-racial and multi-religious nation, factors such as national ideologies and cultural values were addressed when examining conceptions of press freedom.

Due to the focus of the study, two types of framework were utilised: an Islamic theoretical framework, and media theories developed by Western scholars. Methodologically, this study employed an ethnographic approach for analysing Islamic conceptualisations of press freedom. A combination of three qualitative research techniques – in-depth face-to-face interviews, examination of archival documents and personal observations – was utilised to investigate the issues identified in relation to perceptions of press freedom in Malaysia. In-depth face-to-face interviews involved the participation of staff and members from ten organisations and individuals who were not affiliated with these organisations.

The organisations involved in this study were: Ministry of Internal Security Malaysia (MOIS), Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Islamic *Da'wah* Foundation Malaysia (YADIM), Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM), Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ), Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), People's Justice Party (PKR) and Puteri UMNO. The archival documents analysed in this study were gathered from these ten organisations. However, due to certain organisational policies and security concerns, personal observations were only conducted at eight organisations: IKIM, YADIM, ABIM, JIM, CIJ, SUARAM, PAS and PKR. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The results of the data analysis were triangulated to ascertain the extent to which the information obtained was consistent or inconsistent across sources.

The findings of the study showed that there were diverse views among respondents on what constitutes an Islamic press freedom in a multi-racial and multi-religious Malaysia. Due to the different levels of Islamic understanding and divergent interpretations of Islam among Muslims, especially among members of political parties, this study also found that the Islamic theory of press freedom is a highly contested concept. More often than not, the respondents of these organisations claimed that Islamic conceptualisations of press freedom should be based on their personal versions of Islam.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This thesis was written and successfully defended at the University of Queensland, Australia, in 2009.

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Jemilah for members of the audience to commit themselves to social causes that would benefit the *ummah*, the audience's attention was turned to the nucleus of the family in the speech that followed by the university's current Rector, Prof. Dato Dr. Zaleha Kamaruddin. While speaking on the implementation of Islamic Family Law in order to meet the challenges of postmodern relativism and feminism, she offered interesting insights into her own experiences in dealing with the issue, and hoped that IIUM would succeed in creating a generation of law-makers who would be equipped to deal with contemporary issues. The second day kicked off on a high note with a motivational talk by Prof. Muhaya on

the subject of integrating Islamic spiritual and moral perspectives in the education of Muslim medical practitioners. The morning session ended with Prof. Kamal Hassan's talk on "The Deepening Crisis of Contemporary Civilisation and the Urgency of Applying the Paradigm of Tawhid." At the end of the congress, a resolution was put forward by Prof. Kamal Hassan and adopted by the assembly. It praised the current Rector's efforts in placing Islamicisation at the forefront of the University's mission and vision. The conference ended with a motivational video presentation, which was accompanied by a text read by Assoc. Prof. Rahmah Ahmad Hj. Osman, on the importance of team work for realising the goals of Islamicisation.